

# GAINESVILLE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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## DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA

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### FACADE IMPROVEMENTS INCENTIVE PROGRAM for EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

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## FACADE IMPROVEMENTS INCENTIVE PROGRAM

### I. Purpose

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The Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is offering a competitive, matching grant program as an incentive to owners of buildings and businesses to improve building façades located on specifically targeted corridors within the Downtown Expansion Redevelopment Area ("Downtown Redevelopment Area"). The purpose of the grant program is to use Tax Increment Finance to leverage private investment in making significant improvements to building facades, which return public benefits such as enhanced corridor aesthetics, improved pedestrian comfort, and public safety. Since 2003 when the program was implemented CRA wide, each façade grant dollar awarded yielded approximately three times this amount in private funding invested in façade improvements. This document describes eligibility for funding, the application process, and other details related to applying for a grant.

### II. Applicant Eligibility and Requests for Funding

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#### Who is Eligible:

- ◆ Building owners or business owners occupying storefronts in an eligible building who have obtained written approval from building owners are invited to participate in the program and apply for up to \$10,000 in grant funding.
- ◆ Applicants who have previously received a façade grant within the last 12 months are eligible to re-apply for additional funds up to 25% of the original grant award for the same building. The supplemental grant is subject to the 50% match provision. If a project has already received the maximum grant award, then the project is ineligible to receive a supplemental grant.
- ◆ Nightclubs and bars as sole building occupant: Unless the nightclub or bar has been in business for more than three (3) years, costs related to painting the building or addition of business signage will not be eligible for the grant program.
- ◆ Nightclubs and bars with additional uses in upper-stories: Unless the nightclub or bar has been in business for more than three (3) years, the addition of business signage will not be eligible for the grant program.

#### Target Corridors:

Funding is available anywhere in the district, but preference is given to buildings that are physically located on the following corridors:

- ◆ University Avenue
- ◆ Main Street
- ◆ SE and SW 1st Avenue

#### Matching Funds:

Applicant must commit to expending a cash match equal to the grant funds sought in the application. The only form of match that will be accepted is the cash value of goods and services used to improve the façade visible from the target corridor.



**The Turner Building at W. 2nd Street and University Avenue in 2004 (left) and 2006 (right)**

### Eligible Improvements:

Eligible improvements are those found only on the primary public entrance and one additional elevation that are visible from the target corridor. No interior improvements or maintenance activities will be funded. Examples of eligible improvements are listed below (this list is not exhaustive):

- ◆ Signs - including removing the old and the design, production and installation of new signs or renovation of existing signs if compliant with current codes.
- ◆ Awnings/Canopies - including the removal of old awnings and canopies and the design, production, and installation of new awnings and canopies.
- ◆ Facades - Includes work performed on the exterior storefront of a building such as cleaning masonry (high pressure water or steam - sandblasting is prohibited on masonry structures), painting, re-pointing or mortar joints, woodwork, window and/or door replacement, other repairs or rebuilding historic storefronts.
- ◆ Walls, Fencing and Landscaping – Includes work that removes and replaces or adds appropriate fencing and landscaping to hide incompatible uses or negative site elements such as storage yards, outdoor fabrication, work area, or dumpsters.
- ◆ Removing and disposing of old façade coverings - (i.e. vinyl and aluminum cladding, window boards)
- ◆ Architectural fees - (not to exceed \$500 of grant amount).
- ◆ Outdated security features - Removing rollup metal security doors and metal window grates.
- ◆ Removing excessive window signage - Reduce window signage to allow 95% window transparency.
- ◆ Original building elements - Restoring original decorative building elements.
- ◆ Increasing glazing (window area) - Increasing amount of glazing to attain a minimum of 50% of façade area.

The following items are excluded from eligibility for the façade grant: interior improvements, exterior improvements not visible from the target corridors, exterior improvements visible less than 24 hours per day, features designed to be installed temporarily, features that do not meet the applicable provisions of the City of Gainesville Land Development Code including special area plans, activities that are primarily for maintenance (i.e. powerwashing) except to maintain brick masonry. Generally, roof repair is not eligible unless it is integral to the redesign of the façade. In this case, the portion of the roof work that would be eligible for the grant is at the discretion of the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board.

Maintenance items are not eligible for funding: Activities that will be deemed maintenance items are painting, powerwashing, asphalt sealing, landscape maintenance and other maintenance-type activity. This list is not exhaustive. In the event that painting, powerwashing, brick repair or similar cosmetic work is proposed to take place in conjunction with significant structural enhancements, then those activities will be eligible for the incentive.

### Schedule:

Applicant must commit to finishing the project within a reasonable timeframe appropriate to the work proposed. An appropriate time shall be 12 months for projects involving design, permitting, and construction. The 12 month period begins the day after the grant application is approved by the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board. The CRA and grant recipient will negotiate and agree to a work schedule to ensure progress on the project. The schedule will become part of the grant agreement. Grant funds allocated to the project will revert back to the Downtown Redevelopment Area's façade grant fund and the façade redevelopment agreement will terminate if the grant recipient fails to make progress according to the agreed upon work schedule.

### III. Requests for Funding

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Applications for funding must adhere to the following guidelines outlined below:

- ◆ Each storefront will be eligible for a maximum grant of up to \$5,000. If the building, regardless of the number of storefronts, has a second elevation that can be seen from the targeted corridor the building would be eligible for another \$5,000. If a storefront is greater than 30' in width it will be eligible for a grant of up to \$10,000. Applicants must match grant funds dollar-for-dollar. A storefront is defined as having a street address and public access to the business. The maximum grant amount is \$10,000 subject to an annual allocation of tax increment funds for the Downtown Expansion Redevelopment Area. The Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board may, at its discretion, exercise flexibility in the amount of grant funds awarded to eligible applicants provided sufficient funds are available.
- ◆ The dollar-for-dollar match provided by the Grant Recipient shall be cash value for goods and/or services.
- ◆ Work done by business or building owner will not be funded for labor.



**Above, left: Detail of brickwork on the Firestone Building before restoration.  
Above, right: Brickwork on a business on SE 2nd Ave.  
Below: The Firestone Building after restoration in 2013.**



#### **IV. Evaluation of Grant Applications**

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Staff will evaluate applications against the criteria listed below. No partial points will be awarded. Staff will make funding recommendations to the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board, which shall approve, disapprove, or modify the recommendations. The Board reserves the right to reject grant applications that in its view, propose inappropriate colors or designs. The Advisory Board's recommendations shall be forwarded to the Executive Director for final action.

- ◆ Project is physically located along University Avenue, Main Street, or SE/SW 1st Avenue (3 points)
- ◆ Project removes opaque window signage (3 points)  
If the applicant removes opaque window signage either from existing windows or in conjunction with installation of new windows so that up to 95% of the window is maintained as transparent, 3 points will be awarded. Artistic decoration on windows is not counted toward the area restriction.
- ◆ Project transforms the building from the worst to the best case (5 points)  
This is a major transformation that improves the façade condition so that no further improvement would be possible. The project is the highest and best outcome for the building.
- ◆ Project advances an appropriate style for this building (3 points)  
The improvements are compatible with the building's style and complement original features.
- ◆ Project preserves or restores original decorative building elements (3 points)  
Original decorative elements include permanent detailing as part of the original construction such as cornices, decorative masonry, and historic details.
- ◆ Project is needed to attract or retain one of the following businesses: restaurant/café, retail, or office (5 points)  
Project necessary to retain an existing occupant engaged in one of the target businesses, or, if the storefront is vacant/about to be vacated, the project is needed to renovate the storefront for a new business engaged in one of the target businesses. To claim these points, a letter of interest from the business must be received by the CRA with the grant application.
- ◆ Project corrects commercial building code deficiencies related to the façade (3 points)  
The applicable portion of the commercial building code is Section 13-205, Exterior Structures. Projects correcting conditions that would normally constitute a violation of this code will be awarded up to 3 points. A complaint does not have to be filed against the building.
- ◆ Project includes removing non-original cladding materials that cover an original storefront (3 points)  
Projects removing non-original wall cladding made of aluminum, wood, stucco, masonry or other opaque materials that reveal original walls and windows and enhance the storefront will receive up to 3 points.
- ◆ The project is part of a complete restoration that returns a vacant or underutilized upper story space to productive use (5 points)  
The upper story must be vacant or underutilized at the time of the grant application submittal. Productive use is active, full-time use or occupancy such as artist studios, office, or residence. This list is not exhaustive. To claim these points, a letter of interest from the tenant must be received by the CRA with the grant application.
- ◆ Additional points are given for individual improvements i.e. 1 point each for painting, awning, windows, doors, landscaping, signage, and other categories.

#### **V. Application Deadline**

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Applicants must submit their applications to the CRA no later than 5:00 PM on the day that falls four weeks before the issuance of the agenda of the advisory board meeting. Submit completed applications to:

Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency  
Attn: Facade Improvement Incentive Program  
802 NW 5th Ave. Suite 200  
Gainesville, FL 32601

## **VI. Grant Guidelines**

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1. The building façades eligible for the program may be any elevation visible from the target corridor in the Downtown Redevelopment Area.
2. The grant funds may not exceed 50% of the façade improvement project and may not exceed \$10,000.
3. Buildings must meet Health and Safety Standard of the code.
4. Grants may be awarded for projects started before the grant award provided all provisions of the matching grant program are met.
5. All improvements conducted with the use of matching grant funds must be performed in a manner consistent with the City Land Development Code, and all applicable regulations, codes and ordinances.
6. Grant recipients and building owners must agree that improvements made using these funds will stay in place and be maintained a minimum of five years. If the improvements are replaced or not maintained within five years of façade project completion, the grant recipient must repay a pro rata portion of the grant proceeds invested in the project for the number of months remaining as further described in the restrictive covenant required to be filed, a copy of which is attached hereto. By acceptance of the Grant and filing of the façade redevelopment agreement, Grant Recipient and the building owners agree to restore and maintain (keep in good working condition and appearance) the improvements during the five year period, and upon failing to do so shall be obligated to repay a pro rata portion of the grant as described above. The same requirement shall be in effect if the building or business lease is transferred within five years of façade project completion.

### Exceptions:

- i. The improvement has been damaged beyond repair (i.e. broken awning) and the grant recipient has replaced the improvement.
  - ii. The improvement was replaced for the purpose of further renovation that will enhance the project, as determined in the sole discretion of the Executive Director or designee.
7. Applicant is responsible for obtaining or having obtained all required building permits for the work undertaken and must have a current business license throughout the project.
  8. Projects must be completed, or show substantive progress (as determined by CRA staff) within 12 months of the grant award. The CRA shall disburse funds to the grant recipient upon demonstration that the work has been completed.
  9. Grant recipients may undertake projects in a limited number of phases over a two-year span. No phase shall exceed 12 months. If the entire design is approved as part of the initial application, staff approval only will be required for funding of additional phases. Approval of the initial application does not insure that funding will be available for later phases.
  10. Grant extensions shall be granted by the CRA on a very limited, case-by-case basis where the contractor is having difficulty meeting the deadline due to weather delay, scheduling conflicts or supply issues.
  11. The CRA shall have no liability for workmanship, design, or construction related to the project receiving grant funds under this program.
  12. Once a maximum grant for any storefront has been awarded, including the 25% supplemental grant explained in Section II, the business occupying the storefront or building owner cannot reapply for another grant for the same location for a 5-year period.
  13. New grant applicants will have priority over projects applying for funding for phased work.
  14. Grant Recipient agrees to allow the CRA to photograph the project for use in future publications.

## **VII. Digital Design Assistance**

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In an effort to encourage participation in the Façade Improvement Incentive Program, the CRA will offer a technical assistance/digital design consultation to potential grant applicants. This "one-on-one" assistance will be provided to help the building/business owner determine the most effective changes for their building and complete their grant application. Grant applicants will discuss proposed changes with CRA staff and then receive a digitally enhanced image of the changes for inclusion in the grant application.

## VIII. Grant Application Process

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Applications are accepted and evaluated on a continuous, first come, first evaluated basis, subject to funding availability. The Grant application process is as follows:

1. Applicant and CRA staff hold technical assistance/digital design consultation. Contact Jessica Leonard, CRA Project Manager, at 352-393-8206 to arrange an appointment.
2. Submit a completed application to the CRA before the application deadline stated in Section V.
3. Staff reviews the application, completes application ranking, and makes a funding recommendation to Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board at its regularly scheduled public meeting.
4. Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board reviews application rankings and either approves, disapproves or approves with conditions.
5. The CRA will notify applicant of approval or denial in writing.
6. Subsequent to approval, applicant and CRA prepare a façade redevelopment agreement.
7. Applications and façade redevelopment agreements will be presented to the Executive Director or his designee for final action.
8. Grant recipient requests funds after completing the proposed façade improvements.
9. CRA staff inspects the project to verify completion of work as proposed in the application.
10. CRA disburses funds to grant recipient within 30 days of approval of the completed project.

Applications containing the following items shall be deemed complete:

1. Completed application form
2. Photograph of the existing building conditions.
3. Sketches and/or digital illustrations of elevations of proposed improvements with a description
4. Description of materials to be used, the construction procedure and proposed colors.
5. Two cost estimates from different sources.
6. Evidence of agreement with program requirements by building owner, for business owner applicants.
7. Selected contractor's general liability insurance certificate and contractor's license.

Only completed applications will be accepted. Staff will evaluate applications against the criteria listed in section IV.

## X. Nondiscrimination

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The Gainesville CRA does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, race color, gender, age, religion, national origin, marital status, disability or gender identity and will not tolerate any such discrimination by or against its employees or citizens utilizing CRA services, programs, and activities.

